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TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, AR

SUBJECT: AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MEETING WITH ARA

REF: B.A. 4679

SUMMARY: THE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE MET WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STEDMAN ON JULY 6 TO DISCUSS CONDITIONS WHICH LED TO THE DEPARTURE FROM ARGENTINA OF THE COMMITTEE'S REPRESENTATIVE, JACOBO KOVADLOFF, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, AND TO THE CLOSING OF ITS OFFICE IN BUENOS AIRES. COMMITTEE REQUESTED THAT DEPARTMENT PROTEST TREATMENT RECEIVED BY REPRESENTATIVE OF AN AMERICAN ORGANIZATION.

1. RICHARD MAAS, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MORRIS FINE AND DAVID GELLER OF THE COMMITTEE AND ITS ARGENTINE REPRESENTATIVE, JACOBO KOVADLOFF. LATTER EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR
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ASSISTANCE RENDERED TO HIM IN BUENOS AIRES. HE MENTIONED CHARGE CHAPLIN AND OFFICERS FREEMAN AND THAYER SEVERAL TIMES.

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2. KOVADLOFF DETAILED THE HARASSMENTS TO WHICH HE AND HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN SUBJECTED (REFTEL) PRIOR TO THEIR DECISIONS TO LEAVE. HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT LED TO THE THREATS AGAINST HIM BUT WAS INCLINED TO ASSIGN

RESPONSIBILITY TO ARGENTINE ARMY HARDLINERS SUCH AS GENERAL SUAREZ MASON AND RETIRED GENERAL SAINT JEAN. KOVADLOFF FELT THAT THEY MIGHT BE TRYING TO EMBARRASS PRESIDENT VIDELA. HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT HIS CONTACTS WITH THE FAMILY OF IMPRISONED JOURNALIST, JACOBO TIMERMAN, MAY HAVE BEEN THE REASON.

3. ON TIMERMAN, KOVADLOFF SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN MOVED FROM THE LA PLATA TO THE BUENOS AIRES POLICE DEPARTMENT, WHERE HE WAS RECEIVING DAILY VISITS FROM HIS FAMILY AND AN AMERICAN RABBI. HE SAID THAT TIMERMAN HAD BEEN TORTURED ELECTRICALLY DURING HIS FIRST WEEK IN PRISON AND KEPT MANACLED TO A WOODEN CHAIR THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD. HIS JAILERS TRIED TO GET TIMERMAN TO ADMIT THAT HE WAS A PAID ISRAELI AGENT AND THAT HE WAS PAID BY THE JEWISH COMMUNITY TO OPERATE LA OPINION. THOSE WHO THREATENED KOVADLOFF WARNED HIM THAT IF HE DID NOT LEAVE, HE WOULD SUFFER TIMERMAN'S FATE.

4. MR. MAAS REQUESTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROTEST THE ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST KOVADLOFF WHICH HAD LED TO THE CLOSING OF THE OFFICE OF THE COMMITTEE. MAAS EXPLAINED THAT COMMITTEE HAS OPERATED IN ARGENTINA FOR 29 YEARS PROMOTING THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF THE ARGENTINE

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JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ARGENTINE SOCIETY.

5. THE COMMITTEE WAS ADVISED THAT OUR EMBASSY IN BUENOS AIRES HAS RAISED THE QUESTION OF MR. KOVADLOFF'S INTIMIDATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, REQUESTING PROTECTION OF THE COMMITTEE'S PREMISES IN BUENOS AIRES. AMBASSADOR STEDMAN NOTED THAT WE WOULD DECIDE WHETHER FURTHER ACTION, INCLUDING A FORMAL COMMUNICATION IN WRITING, WAS APPROPRIATE AFTER READING THE EMBASSY'S REPORT.

6. THE COMMITTEE PLANS TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO THE PRESS ON JULY 7, NOTING THEIR APPRECIATION FOR EMBASSY'S ASSISTANCE AND THAT THEY HAVE REQUESTED A USG PROTEST. VANCE

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